



SEAPORT

NORTH CENTRAL IDAHO: CLEARWATER, IDAHO, LATAH, LEWIS, & NEZ PERCE COUNTIES

EMPLOYMENT TRENDS

Seaport's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate increased in December to 4.0 percent from November's rate of 3.8 percent, as shown in Seaport Table 1. In December 2001, the rate was 4.5 percent. The December decrease in *Total Employment* was unusual because December is traditionally a strong employment month. One of the reasons for the decrease was that holiday hiring lagged behind last year. Starting in October, area retail managers predicted a slow holiday season. Overall, they were right. Stores reported holiday sales were down from last year.

In December, Seaport's *Nonfarm Payroll Jobs* remained at the same level as November 2002, but decreased 1,030 from December 2001. Nearly all sectors contributed to the decreases. Layoffs in key *Manufacturing* sectors started job decreases that rippled through the economy. The economic concern is that because nearly all industries posted decreases, there was little economic growth to help soften the layoffs.

SPECIAL TOPIC

Average Wages

The average wage in Idaho in 2002 rose only 0.7 percent from 2001, the weakest increase in the country, according to recently released data from the U.S. Department of Commerce Bureau of Economic Analysis. (See details in Seaport Table 2.) The wage gap between rural and urban areas narrowed slightly, but city workers still averaged \$5,900 more last year than their rural counterparts. Nationally, the average wage increased 2.6 percent. Two North Central Idaho rural counties that showed wage decreases also have been mired in double-digit percentage unemployment for the past several years—Clearwater and Idaho Counties. Only Nez Perce and Lewis Counties reported wage increases at or above the national increase in North Central Idaho.

AREA DEVELOPMENTS

Clearwater County

- Clearwater Valley Hospital has started construction on an expanded emergency room (ER). Construction of the 2,100-square-foot addition should take approximately seven months. During that time, the ER will continue to provide services. The new addition ex-

Seaport Table 1: Labor Force & Employment
Nez Perce County, Idaho and Asotin County, Washington

	Dec 2002*	Nov 2002	Dec 2001	% Change From	
				Last Month	Last Year
INDIVIDUALS BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE					
Seasonally Adjusted					
Civilian Labor Force	35,140	34,530	33,500	1.8	4.9
Unemployment	1,420	1,300	1,490	9.2	-4.7
% of Labor Force Unemployed	4.0	3.8	4.5	0.2	0.5
Total Employment	33,720	33,230	32,010	1.5	5.3
Unadjusted					
Civilian Labor Force	35,230	34,410	33,570	2.4	4.9
Unemployment	1,470	1,240	1,550	18.5	-5.2
% of Labor Force Unemployed	4.2	3.6	4.6	0.6	0.4
Total Employment	33,760	33,170	32,020	1.8	5.4
JOBS BY PLACE OF WORK					
Nonfarm Payroll Jobs**					
	25,560	25,560	26,590	0.0	-3.9
Goods-Producing Industries					
Mining & Construction	4,900	4,940	4,960	-0.8	-1.2
Manufacturing	1,250	1,290	1,240	-3.1	0.8
Food Processing	3,650	3,650	3,720	0.0	-1.9
Lumber & Wood Products	70	80	120	-12.5	-41.7
Paper Products	640	640	710	0.0	-9.9
All Other Manufacturing	1,600	1,590	1,630	0.6	-1.8
Service-Producing Industries	1,340	1,340	1,260	0.0	6.3
Transportation	20,660	20,620	21,630	0.2	-4.5
Communications & Utilities	1,290	1,290	1,300	0.0	-0.8
Wholesale Trade	270	270	280	0.0	-3.6
Retail Trade	930	920	960	1.1	-3.1
Finance, Insurance, & Real Estate	4,860	4,830	5,030	0.6	-3.4
Services	1,670	1,660	1,740	0.6	-4.0
Government Administration	6,710	6,730	7,130	-0.3	-5.9
Government Education	2,610	2,610	2,650	0.0	-1.5
	2,320	2,310	2,540	0.4	-8.7
*Preliminary Estimate					
**Full- or part-time jobs of people who worked for or received wages in the pay period including the 12th of the month					

Seaport Table 2: Average Wages 2000-2001

	2000	2001	CHANGE	CHANGE
COUNTY				
Clearwater	24,651	24,284	-367	-1.5
Idaho	22,851	22,471	-380	-1.7
Latah	21,868	22,007	139	0.6
Lewis	19,051	19,796	745	3.9
Nez Perce	27,210	27,910	700	2.6
Asotin (Washington State)	23,226	23,794	568	2.4
STATE				
Idaho	27,091	27,268	177	0.7
Washington	37,420	37,849	429	1.1
Oregon	32,222	32,655	433	1.3
UNITED STATES	34,647	35,550	903	2.6

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, December 2002 The employment estimates used to compute the average wage are a job, not person, count. People holding more than one job are counted in the employment estimates for each job they hold.

pands the current two-bay ER into four bays, including one isolation room. It also adds a family waiting area, a doctor's dictation area, and sleeping quarters.

- Construction has begun on Phase I of the Weippe Discovery Center. S&W Construction of Grangeville won the bid at \$136,000. Two hundred years ago Lewis and Clark and the Corps of Discovery met the Nez Perce Indians on the Weippe Prairie in that location. Many of Weippe's community organizations are working together to create a center that will incorporate Lewis and Clark interpretive murals, a library, technology area, small business enhancement center, conference room, and a college outreach center.

Idaho and Lewis Counties

- The Benedictine Sisters at the Monastery of St. Gertrude near Cottonwood are planning a building and renovation project. Plans call for creating a team of contractors and architects to accomplish two tasks: draw up schematics for a new spirituality and retreat center and design a plan for renovations on the historic monastery building. "The number of people who come each year to the monastery for retreat and spiritual rest has nearly doubled since 1999," said Sister Lalande. "In order to expand this ministry and maintain our own contemplative and monastic way of life, we find ourselves needing to create space designed specifically for the work of retreat-making." The new spirituality and retreat center will include meeting and conference rooms, office space, and several bedrooms for guests, oblates, and people who are on retreats. The new structure will also include storage space for the archives and the historical museum. "Our historic monastery building needs to be upgraded too," said Sister Lalande. "We are doing twenty-first century work in a nineteenth century building with many of the original systems still in place."
- Trains may continue to run from Spalding to Cottonwood with the purchase of the former Camas Prairie RailNet line from Craigmont to Cottonwood. BG&CM Railroad has purchased the abandoned line from its intersection with the Camas Prairie RailNet at Spalding through the tunnels and across the trestles to the Camas Prairie. BG&CM now owns the line through Cottonwood to approximately one-half mile south of town to allow room for switching at the grain elevators. The company doesn't plan to purchase any engines at this time. They will instead contract with Camas Prairie RailNet to pull cars when necessary. Salvage has been completed on the railroad line from Cottonwood to Grangeville.
- Syringa General Hospital in Grangeville will receive a \$100,000 grant for an off-site community center. The hospital plans to move EMT equipment and ambulances to the new location to allow space for future expansion at the hospital. The community education center will be made available to community members for various types of training including CPR classes, search and rescue training, and baby-sitter education classes.

Latah County

- The success of Latah County's local economy depends heavily on the University of Idaho (UI). According to a new study on economic impacts of higher education by UI, neighboring Washington State University in Pullman and Lewis-Clark State College in Lewiston combined add \$1 billion in business for Latah, Whitman, Nez Perce, and Asotin Counties per year. Because of UI's growing research arm, the local economy stands to benefit from the war on terrorism through grant money aimed at developing security software, biohazard sensors, and other advances.

Nez Perce and Asotin Counties

- Citing inefficiency at the Port of Portland in the wake of the longshoremen's work stoppage, Potlatch Corporation has shifted the bulk of its shipping business to Puget Sound, bypassing the Port of Lewiston and Snake and Columbia Rivers. The reduction in volume from the Port of Lewiston's second largest shipper prompted the port to lay off four of 10 full-time container yard employees.
- Members of the largest union at Potlatch Corporation's Lewiston site have approved a contract the company's executives believe will make the plant's wages and benefits competitive with similar manufacturers. "We've known for a long time that we have an outstanding work force at this site," said Mark Benson, Potlatch's public affairs director for the Western region. "They have again demonstrated their commitment to making this operation viable." The greatest share of Potlatch Corporation's Lewiston hourly employees are taking a 3.0 percent pay cut for about 19 months of a four-year agreement. In later years of the contract, they will get raises—2.75 percent in September 2004 and the same amount in September 2005. The negotiations occurred in some of the toughest times of Potlatch's existence. Potlatch lost \$200 million in the first three quarters of 2002. It finished \$33.2 million short of profit in 2000 and lost \$80 million in 2001. In November 2002 Potlatch announced it was cutting 51 salaried jobs in Lewiston. The job cuts for the Lewiston site started in 2000 with the elimination of 100 salaried positions. Potlatch froze the wages of its salaried employees in 2001 and 2002, but plans to lift the freeze in 2003.
- Three new businesses have recently located in Nez Perce Plaza in Lewiston. They include Quizno's, a sandwich shop; Black River Coffee, a coffee house; and Sally Beauty Supply, a beauty supply store. These new businesses join a mix of regional businesses and national chains that are filling spaces in the largest new shopping center in the region. Business owners believe shoppers will flock to Nez Perce Plaza and make their businesses thrive.

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